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THE **NEW**FACE OF Organized Labor


LiUNA!



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The background of the page features a silhouette of two construction workers on a building site. They are standing on a structure with vertical rebar, with a sunset or sunrise sky in the background. The scene is overlaid with a large, stylized, semi-transparent letter 'A' and other geometric shapes in shades of orange and yellow.

The Labourers' International Union of North America (LiUNA!) is the fastest growing union of construction workers, waste management workers, show service workers and healthcare workers in Canada. The organization boasts more than half a million members across North America, united through collective bargaining agreements to help secure better pay, better benefits, better pensions, and better opportunities.

Written by Claire Suttles

LiUNA prides itself on being a progressive union that is forging new ground for a new era of organized labour. "The reputation of [unions in] the past has been only as

advocates for their members' wages," says Joseph S. Mancinelli, LiUNA's International Vice President and Regional Manager for Central and Eastern Canada. "Unions are viewed in general ►

► as advocates for increasing wages for their membership and achieving this through egregious methods, maybe strikes and conflicts. But the world has changed. It has changed dramatically. Unions are no longer advocates only for our members' wages. Certainly we do make sure they continue to make a good standard of living—that has not changed. But we are far more than that."

Mr. Mancinelli sat down with Business in Focus to share how LiUNA supports members—and the nation as a whole—through community-building efforts and progressive, 21st century advocacy. Recently re-elected to another five year term, the well-known leader, father, and artist is eager to continue setting an example of what organized labour can achieve in the new millennium.

Armed with a strong 'no-strike' record, LiUNA strives to remain positive and proactive as it works to represent members'

interests. "We have a big responsibility to ensure that we represent our people properly and that we represent them well. [We want to] make sure that the [reputation] of the organization is very positive so that folks feel proud to be our members and they feel that they are important members of their communities."

LiUNA's commitment to communities has become a core part of the organization. "Our involvement in our communities is much deeper than it has ever been and it continues to grow," Mr. Mancinelli shares. "Our outreach to different parts of the community is also much greater. We work with all of our cities and our communities right across the country."

LiUNA's charity work is a prime example of this community involvement. "We work closely with our communities on fundraising efforts," Mr. Mancinelli explains. In the past few years, LiUNA has given \$4.5 million to charitable causes in Central and ►



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LiUNA strives to remain positive and proactive as it works to represent members' interests."

- Eastern Canada alone. LiUNA supports a variety of causes, from community hospitals and Down Syndrome research to local sports leagues. The organization's philanthropic endeavours are "unprecedented among other trade unions. And that is because we want to reinforce that we are more than a union of the past."

This reinforcement sends a positive message to members as well as to those outside of the organization. "If you see that LiUNA is doing fundraising for hospitals and healthcare facilities in your area, and you are a member of LiUNA, you feel proud. And that pride can't be underestimated in making members feel that they are an important part of the community."

LiUNA's community activism is reinventing the role of unions. "At one time, the business community had a monopoly on fundraising initiatives in the community," Mr. Mancinelli points out. "But now, if you ask any businessperson in any major city in Canada, they will tell you that LiUNA is one of their partners on a number of these initiatives. In the past, unions were viewed as an adversary to that business community; now we

are looked at as a partner. That is a huge shift in the way people view our union. Hopefully this will be contagious and change the attitude and the perception that the general public has of organized labour in general."

Another example of LiUNA's community activism is the organization's outreach to Canada's indigenous population. "LiUNA's opinion is that one of the greatest blemishes that our great country has had is how our indigenous community has been treated." In October, Mr. Mancinelli signed a Statement of Partnership with the First Nations Summit (FNS) that acknowledges and recognizes the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The partnership agreement builds on the strong collaboration between LiUNA and Canada's indigenous community that began over a decade ago with the Assembly of First Nations.



LiUNA wants this Statement of Partnership to be more than words on paper. "We have ramped up our approach on ►►

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► working together with the indigenous community,” says Mr. Mancinelli. “We are working diligently to assure that the things we achieve are not only words, but actions. LiUNA is prepared to walk the walk and not just talk the talk.” For instance, the union has already launched multiple training initiatives for indigenous people throughout Canada to help them land jobs in the construction industry.

Safety is another key initiative for LiUNA. “We advocate to make sure [members] have good, safe employment. We are the strongest advocates in Canada for safety. It is so important that our members go home safely every night to their families.”

This commitment to safety extends to the community at large. For instance, LiUNA does outreach work on pipeline safety that affects all of Canada. “We believe that petroleum is going to be transported whether we like it or not. [Since] that is the case, let’s make sure that it is done the safest way possible. That is why LiUNA is taking such a strong leadership position in pipeline safety, to ensure that our communities are protected.”



The LIUNA Canadian Tri-Fund is committed to representing the LIUNA membership across Canada.



As our name suggests, the Canadian TRI-FUND has three main focuses: Wellness Promotion and Health & Safety; Training Development and Recruitment; and, Legislative Affairs and Marketing. The Canadian Tri-Fund embodies the principle of Labour-Management Cooperation in all that we do. From fighting for safety legislation and regulatory change to establishing the most comprehensive training programs, we are building a better workplace and providing a highly-skilled workforce.

I would like to congratulate our LIUNA Vice President, Joseph Mancinelli, on his inspired leadership and his commitment to keeping LIUNA strong.

John Mandarin
Executive Director
LIUNA Canadian Tri-Fund

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The Hi-Rise Group congratulates Joseph Mancinelli
on his re-election as LIUNA International
Vice-President, Central & Eastern Canada Regional
Manager and President of LIUNA Local 837.

May he continue his great work in the best of health and well being.



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LiUNA works closely with government to benefit members and their communities. "We do have the ear of government because they pay attention to some of the things that we are doing," Mr. Mancinelli explains. Many high-ranking LiUNA members sit on various boards where they can work to influence policy decisions. "I sat on Metrolinx advisory board, for example. And that will effect change to our transportation initiative. A number of our representatives are being encouraged to sit on a number of different boards that make a difference in the community and in the province and even federally."

LiUNA also works to educate lawmakers in order to bring change. For instance, Mr. Mancinelli is giving a presentation this month to a federal committee that is considering Canada's future energy plan. "Of course that is controversial because some folks don't want to pull any oil or minerals out of the ground. But Canada is a country that relies on our natural resources. So this committee wants to hear our opinion on the natural resources and our energy needs for the future. Our opinion is that Canada can't abandon natural resources. This is a country that relies heavily on its natural resources. I think it does a lot for our economy and it does a lot to keep people employed."

"Our involvement in our communities is much deeper than it has ever been and it continues to grow."

LiUNA's research team has carefully considered these, and other, issues of national importance. "Our research departments [study] the sectors that will keep the Canadian economy moving in the right direction, creating good employment opportunities, creating economic activity that is not only good for LiUNA members, but is good for everybody. We are not only advocating on behalf of our own constituency, but we are advocating for what is good for Canada. We are not a group that only looks after its own constituency. Clearly we do that—and we do that well—but it goes far beyond that. It goes to what is good for our communities. If our communities are healthy and our country is healthy, the chances are that our members are healthy."

LiUNA's forward-thinking pension plan is another area in which the union is breaking new ground. "We are taking a very strong business approach to our investment strategy," Mr. Mancinelli shares. This strategy looks at the bigger picture in addition to returns. "We want to make sure that we make the highest level ►

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At LiUNA Local 837, the word "UNION" means good wages, good benefits, a pension plan, safe working conditions and being treated with respect and dignity on the job. We are a strong and respected voice in the City of Hamilton. We look to the past with pride and to the future with optimism, as we continue to build communities and opportunities for working families in our great City.

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Business Manager

Joseph S. Mancinelli
President

Riccardo Persi
Secretary-Treasurer

Lucio Albanoo
Vice President

Sam Porto
Recording Secretary

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Executive Board Member

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► of return so that our pension promise to our pensioners and our future pensioners is realized. But there are innovative ways to gain those returns. We are investing in areas of the economy that create work for our members so that their pension contributions come back into the pension plan based on the work that we have created.”

LiUNA launched one of the first infrastructure funds created by a pension plan in Canada. “It is still one of the very, very few infra-

structure funds that are completely controlled by a pension plan. It is not a pooled infrastructure fund—it is our own infrastructure fund.” The unique fund has already invested in \$6 billion dollars worth of work in sectors in which members are employed.

The fund invests in public-private partnership projects that build social infrastructure, such as courthouses, detention centers, and hospitals. “This is an innovative approach to social infrastructure,” Mr. Mancinelli points out. “There is more than


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just the return from building these infrastructure projects." Members (as well as many other trades) gain access to work and the communities gain access to the facilities that they need. "The impact that it has on communities cannot be underestimated. There is a win-win here."

For example, LiUNA has invested in eight new hospitals in Ontario. "That has given us double-digit returns for our pension plans and our members worked on all eight of them,

so their contributions are coming back into the fund as well." The project also increased community access to quality health-care. "Now they have hospitals that they didn't have before." And, locals gained this access with no cost to the taxpayer. "The provincial government did not have the funds to build these hospitals," Mr. Mancinelli points out. "So the business consortium [of which LiUNA is a part] came up with the funds to build these hospitals so that the government did not have to dig into the coffers of our tax payers to do it." ►



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► Furthermore, these hospitals were delivered as promised. "We bid on those [hospital projects] and won those because we are competitive. And we built these hospitals on time and on budget. We are proud of that."

LiUNA has also launched a development fund as part of its out-of-the-box pension plan. The organization purchases rundown or underused properties and renovates these buildings into grade A residential real estate. "We started a development fund so we can invest in development that many of our business partners and our contractors that employ our members are investing in," Mr. Mancinelli explains.

As with the infrastructure fund, the results are win-win. The investment creates more work for members while creating double-digit returns and raising LiUNA's public profile. "Taking derelict buildings and transforming them is good for the community," Mr. Mancinelli points out. "In major centers [including] downtown Toronto and downtown Ottawa, we are turning derelict buildings into affordable residential space and condominium space. It is very, very positive."



Last year, Benefits Canada ranked LiUNA's pension plan as the seventh fastest growing pension plan in the country. "I think that part of that growth has to do with the innovative way that we are investing. Clearly those kinds of [double-digit] returns are much better returns than the equity markets. In general, the equity market has given us four percent or five percent returns—not exactly the returns you need these days to meet your promise to the pensioners and the future pensioners."

LiUNA is careful to choose projects that will give excellent returns without risking pensioners' hard earned dollars. "We have to be innovative without taking on too much risk," Mr. Mancinelli points out. "Government related projects through the infrastructure fund clearly are not risky. When was the last time you saw a hospital go under? These are pretty safe investments that show a level of innovation that no other pension plan—and quite frankly no other organization in organized labour—has been able to show."

This investment success required partnering with private businesses to create consortia. "We are working closely with our business partners to ensure we receive these win-win situations. The stigma of the antagonist union versus business has evaporated." In fact, "A lot of times we have been called by some of the more left leaning unions in the country a business union. We don't think that that is a derogatory categorization of who we are. We embrace the fact that we act like a business and treat our members' concerns with the same kind of seriousness that a board of directors would of their shareholders. Our members deserve to be treated with that level of seriousness."

From community involvement to creative investment strategies, LiUNA is not your father's union. "There has been a transformation of organized labour from the 1940s and 50s, where you needed that level of conflict to achieve what you wanted to achieve," Mr. Mancinelli summarizes. "But here we are in 2016 and the world has changed; there are different ways to achieve our goals. And LiUNA is the perfect example of how these innovative methods work in favour of our members, in favour of our pension plan, in favour of employment, in favour of our ability to work closely with government and effectuate change in legislation."

With another five-year term on the horizon, Mr. Mancinelli is eager to continue achieving LiUNA's goals and make a difference for both members and their communities. ■



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